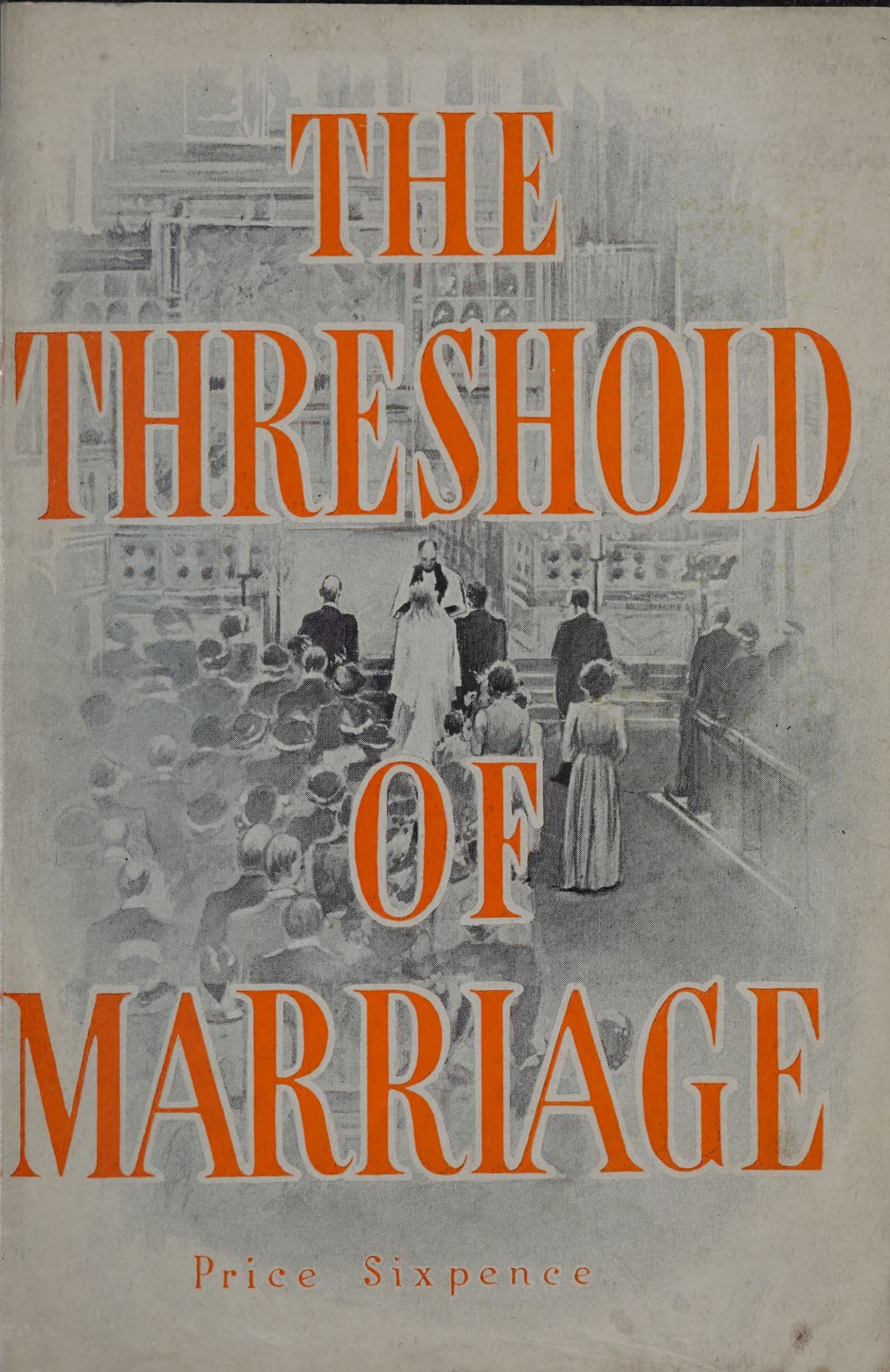




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A PRACTICAL GUIDE
FOR ALL WHO INTEND
TO BE MARRIED IN CHURCH

(Revised and Re-written 1949)

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FOREWORD

by

THE LORD BISHOP OF BATH AND WELLS

Chairman of the Church of England Moral Welfare Council

I VERY gladly commend this new edition of the 'Threshold of Marriage'. This book has had a most impressive circulation in its original form. Before its re-issue, however, it has been very considerably revised in the light of present day problems and needs. It will, I am sure, be found valuable to clergy in the work of preparation for marriage, and it will also have its real value for those who are about to be married. I hope it may have a wide circulation and be the means of helping many.

William Bath: et Well:

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THE THRESHOLD OF MARRIAGE

THE MEANING OF MARRIAGE

WHY BOTHER WITH A BOOK :

YOU are going to get married, and to marry for life. That is, on any reckoning, a big step to take. Your whole future depends on it—and you mean that it should. You are, now, two very different people. You have different parents and friends, different likes and dislikes. Above all, one of you is a 'man' and the other a 'woman.' What a world of difference is there !

You are going to make a new home, and start a new family. The world in which you will do this is full of unrest and disorder. What it will look like in twenty years' time, when your children are growing up, no one can tell you. You may even hear people say that to bring children into a world where the future is so uncertain, is too great a responsibility.

One thing at least you are sure of; you are in love. You know that your love is real; and so you are ready to leave your father and mother, your home, and perhaps the town in which you have spent your childhood, and begin a new life together. You are going to give yourselves to each other — completely, joyfully, and 'for keeps.' So you start with something splendidly real and final.

Most couples set out with this same faith and hope. But many lose heart when they meet with troubles and problems they had not expected, and so were unprepared for; and some give up altogether. That is one reason why this book has been written, and why you are urged to read it. It is not just 'good advice.' It is mainly a statement of *facts* — facts that you ought to know if your marriage is going to be all that you long to make it: a real and glorious success.

WHAT MARRIAGE IS

The first of these facts is simply — what marriage *is*. You have heard it called a partnership, a contract, a 'holy estate.' Indeed it is all of these. But it is something more — the union of husband and wife for the rest of their earthly lives, of which a new home is the proper setting, and children the natural fulfilment. This joining and sharing of all that they have and are is completed first on the physical plane by sexual intercourse; but it takes many years — a lifetime — to become what it's meant to be in the heart and mind. Marriage is not just a partnership — something which either partner can bring to an end if he feels he's getting the worst of a bad bargain. It is, for those who are married, *their whole lives* — joined, shared, surrendered one to the other gladly and freely; for nothing less will content them. Marriage is the great way in which the two halves of the human race — men and women — are united. It is a living bridge which joins husband and wife, and which they build together through the years. You who are deeply in love long for marriage not only to crown your love but also to complete you, each in the other. Each of you has some gifts and powers which the other lacks, partly because you belong to opposite sexes. These differences — physical, mental and spiritual — make for a richness and fulness which are the glory of marriage, and bring a new 'wholeness' and well-being to both husband and wife. If you did not feel that already, you would not be thinking of marriage. But remember that this new life, with its wonderful possibilities, doesn't just happen. It has to be made — by you. That will be so to the end, however long you may live; and it is so from the beginning.

When your wedding day comes it is *you* who will make the marriage. In later years you will very likely say 'We were married by the Vicar of St. . . . 's, or by Mr. So-and-so.' But that won't be strictly true. The priest or minister is simply the chief witness of your marriage, and declares God's blessing upon it. The essential thing is what *you* do and say — the vows you make and the pledges you give each other.

You, and the priest, and the other witnesses, and your friends in the congregation, are not by any means the only people concerned. The State has made laws about marriage, and expects you to keep them. Above all, it is God who has given you to each other, who joins you together, and offers you both His help that your marriage may succeed. That is the truth of the saying that 'marriages are made in heaven.' Every true marriage is; but it has to be lived on earth.

MARRIAGE IS AN ART

A SCULPTOR must know two things as he sets to work. He must understand the stone he is working with, or 'faults' will spoil his statue. And he must have in his mind the ideal picture of what he wants to create. In this sense marriage is an art. You can hardly begin it without knowing something of *persons* — the way their minds, their feelings, their bodies, actually work. You must also have an 'ideal' of family life — a picture of what you want your marriage and home to be.

WHAT IS A "MAN" — AND A "WOMAN?"

In what ways are men and women unlike each other? How does marriage affect them? The differences between them can never be fully explained; but that is no reason why husbands and wives should be always at cross purposes. Such remarks as "These women again!" or "Just like a man!" only show that those who make them cannot be bothered to think. Many a marriage breaks down because husband or wife does not *try* to understand how the other thinks, and feels.

A woman's emotions, as a rule, are more quickly stirred than a man's. She reacts more promptly to her immediate surroundings. She is more easily moved to laughter or tears. A man tends to be absorbed in a few main interests, often outside the home; and where those are not concerned, he is apt to be bored.

A woman lives more in the home, and more in the present. She finds in the passing moment entertainment and pleasure, as well as cause for apparently needless depression. This, and her keener sensitiveness, may make the process of settling down, in the first few months of marriage, more trying to the wife than to the husband, whose outside interests take his mind from the problems that ought to be faced by both of them.

A man has, on the whole, smaller reserves of energy than a woman. she can miss a meal, or a proper night's rest, with less discomfort than he. If a wife finds that her husband, when he comes home from work, does not take a keen interest in household affairs until he has had a square

meal, that is not because he is greedy, or merely pig-headed. Feed him *before* you tell him about all the day's events.

THEIR AFFECTIONS

Speaking generally, a woman's affections are more stable than a man's. When a man has married a wife, he may feel she is in his power. Just because he can feel so sure of her loyalty, he may take no special pains to deserve and retain it. It should, of course, be quite the other way round. Because he has his wife's happiness in his hands, he should show her all possible tenderness and affection. She, in turn, will make herself as attractive, intelligent and cheerful a companion as she can.

Neither can take it for granted that love will continue and grow without plenty of hard work. Your wedding day is not the end of your courtship — that must go on all through your married life. You must be 'lovers' always. There must be the same respect for each other, the same desire to please, the same consideration, after marriage as before. By showing your love in such ways, you will increase and enrich it.

This is true in a special way of bodily intercourse, which is more than just the fulfilment of sexual desire. Husband and wife share in this act because they share *their whole lives*, their joys and their hopes, including the hope of children. Behind every act of intercourse should be the loyalty and trust which make it a sacrament of love.

You are both looking forward to the future and all that it holds in store. However, it is well to be sure that the past has left no trace which might spoil your happiness, or which you will always fear may come to light. If there is anything in the past which your partner ought to know, make a clean breast of it. Better break off the engagement and cancel the wedding than begin your married life with a secret you cannot share with your wife or husband. Confess it now, and be sure that one who truly loves you will understand and forgive. If for any reason you think it would be unwise to speak of it to your partner, at any rate you should make your confession to God. If you cannot be certain what you ought to do, a wise and experienced priest will be able to help you.

HAPPY EVER AFTER :

Marriage means that two separate personalities are blending, not that either is swamped by the other. The husband will not expect the

wife to do always just what he wants, simply because he wants it; nor will the wife make such demands on her husband. There must be give and take, on each side.

You sometimes hear people say that marriage is all very thrilling and wonderful at the start, but soon the romance fades away, and then you must settle down to a dull, monotonous life in 'double harness.' Some marriages are like that; but they need not be. When husband and wife are prepared to *work* for happiness, to learn by mistakes, to grow in their understanding of one another, marriage becomes more interesting and more joyful year by year.

You light your sitting-room fire. At first the wood and paper flare up, and the flames flicker and dance. Yet it is only when the fire settles down to a steady glow that it really does its job, and provides the comfort and satisfaction you look for. So it is with marriage. The later years of more mature love and deeper experience may have lost some of the sparkle of 'first love.' But what they have gained is precious beyond compare.

RELIGION

If you and your wife (or husband) have the same religious convictions and can worship together in church, that will, of course, increase the happiness of your marriage and make your whole relationship deeper and richer. If, on the other hand, religion means a great deal to one and little to the other, the most important thing in life cannot be shared. Where both have sincere religious convictions but belong to different Churches, other difficulties may arise. Sometimes one of the parties is required to give a pledge that any children of the marriage shall be brought up in the faith of the other. The last Lambeth Conference issued a solemn warning to Anglican men and women against contracting marriages with Roman Catholics since this involves, among other things, 'a promise to have their children brought up in a religious system which they cannot themselves accept.'

MISTAKES

At the beginning, when they are thrown together for the first time in close and continuous intimacy, it is hardly likely that husband and wife will reach the full happiness of marriage all at once. This is true of the sexual relationship as of other things. If intercourse is not

quite as delightful and satisfying as they had both expected, they must accept their disappointment with good humour. Many couples have been through the same experience and look back on it with a smile. Time and patience will cure most difficulties of this kind. If not, seek the help of a wise and experienced married friend, or a doctor or minister expert in these matters.

A SENSE OF HUMOUR

Married life is not only a test of character, but also a means of forming it. To make the best of it demands good sense and good humour, the power to see things — including oneself — in their true proportions. It prevents a fault or a grievance from being magnified, or imagined where they do not exist at all. On the other hand, if they *do* exist, the only sensible thing is for the one who is wrong to own up, and for the other to forgive. This is one of the hall-marks of Christian marriage. Differences of opinion, mistakes, and injuries of one kind and another there are bound to be. But a husband and wife who are true to their love for each other will grow through these very differences and mistakes to fuller understanding and deeper friendship.

“CHANGING EACH OTHER”

Each of you may have noticed certain faults in the other. Perhaps you made a mental note that, although such faults were not very serious during your engagement, after marriage you will be able to deal with them. Then you will have the chance to change your partner's behaviour, or character, to your own plan.

That is all very well when your're buying a costume or a house; but human beings do not respond to such treatment. You take each other in marriage for what you are, not for what you intend to make one another. Of course you will both have to alter some of your habits and ways. But let it be by free consent, on both sides.

MARRIED INTERCOURSE

MARRIAGE is a partnership of two whole personalities, not of parts of two personalities. The whole of our human nature must enter into it. It has a spiritual side, because we are spiritual beings, and love is a spiritual thing. It has a social side, because husband and wife and children have to live in a world full of other human beings. It has a material side, because hard facts like work and money have to be faced if the home is to be kept together. It has also a physical side. Every human being is a body and soul united. The soul cannot do without the body, or the body without the soul. The soul works through the body and shows itself in bodily acts of all kinds—from shaking hands with a stranger, to the lover's caress.

ITS VALUE

It would be wrong to exaggerate the importance of intercourse. It is not the be-all and end-all of married life. Married couples differ very much in the value they set upon it. Some find it more and more precious as they grow through bodily union to one-ness of heart and mind. Others find it becoming less and less important.

For people who stand, like you, on the threshold of marriage, sexual intercourse is naturally part of their expectation, and a very important part. It is well that this should be clearly understood between husband-and-wife-to-be, however little they say to each other about it. It has been known to happen that a man and a woman who were very close friends got married on the strength of their friendship, only to find that the very idea of intercourse was simply unbearable to one or the other of them; and the result was tragedy. Better not marry at all, if there is no agreement on this fundamental matter.

The physical side of married life is as truly part of God's purpose as any other. You should understand it in order to help each other in making a happy and satisfying sexual relationship, free from embarrassment and anxiety.

Married intercourse is the appointed means of doing two things. It is the act which leads to conception, and so to the birth of children.

It is also the special way by which husband and wife express their love for each other, and by which that love deepens and grows.

CONCEPTION

The life-story of every child begins at conception, which takes place in the mother's womb. Conception is the meeting of an egg-cell of the mother with one of the fertilising cells of the male substance, or *semen*, which comes from the body of the father.

The egg-cells come from the *ovaries*, paired organs the size of an almond which lie within the pelvis, between the hip-bones. Once every month, an egg-cell released from one of the ovaries is drawn towards the womb along a connecting tube. The womb is connected with the outside of the body by a passage called the *vagina*.

Corresponding to the female ovaries are the *testes* of the male, which lie outside the body in a bag of skin called the *scrotum*. In these male cells ('sperms') are formed, and in the act of intercourse they pass through the penis, which has been introduced into the vagina, and so reach the womb. If a sperm then meets an egg-cell, the two combine to form a fertilised egg ('ovum') and thus conception takes place. A new life has begun, and after nine months of pregnancy a child will be born.

THE MONTHLY CYCLE AND MENSTRUATION

The monthly cycle is part of nature's preparation for conception. By means of it the inner surface of the *uterus*, or womb, is put into a condition which enables the ovum, if fertilised, to be fixed and grow in the early stages of development.

Menstruation is not an illness, but a natural function. Pain, depression and irritability are not normal at the period, but when they appear, as they sometimes do even in healthy women, they call for special consideration on the part of the husband. Loss of blood is liable to leave anyone limp and tired. If there is persistent trouble at this time, medical advice must be taken.

The most usual time for release of the egg-cell from the ovary is the fourteenth day *before* menstruation begins, though there may be variations from this in particular cases. Whether or no conception occurs after intercourse depends on the length of time the egg-cell remains

in the female passages after leaving the ovary, and on how long the sperms remain active after being discharged.

After conception, menstruation normally ceases and no more egg-cells are released from the ovaries till the mother has had her baby.

THE PERSONAL SIDE

So much for the physical side of intercourse and pregnancy. When it comes to the personal side, the attitude of mind is all-important, because intercourse is not only a physical act, but one in which two *personalities* meet and blend. Like the whole of married life, this most intimate part of it should be approached in a spirit of joyful anticipation, with perfect freedom and confidence.

It is most important that the act should be really mutual, its fulfilment shared by both. Both should desire it, and both should rejoice in it. The more completely you can help each other to take part gladly and eagerly, the happier for you both. Do not be afraid that there is anything wrong or immodest in this. Perfect love casts out all such fears.

PREPARATION

Unless the mind is ready and eager for intercourse, the body cannot function properly. On each occasion bodily changes have to take place *in both* husband and wife. The man's penis becomes stiff and erect. The wife's vagina is lubricated by a slippery fluid which flows from special glands near its mouth.

These changes take place more slowly in the wife than in the husband, and result from his caressing of her face, breasts, and other parts of the body. This love-making is essential if the wife is to take her full share in intercourse, and enjoy it as much as her husband.

LOVE'S SACRAMENT

Once intercourse has begun, it should reach its natural climax in both husband and wife; otherwise they will feel strained and dissatisfied.

For the man the completion of the act is clearly marked, and is followed at once by relief and contentment. It should bring the same happiness to the wife, though she reaches her climax, as a rule, more slowly than her husband. He should therefore try to delay the climax in order to give her time. If he reaches it first, he should continue union

as long as is necessary for her to reach hers too. Experience will probably enable them in the end to reach their climax together.

THE HONEYMOON

It is often supposed that marriage must be consummated by a complete act of union on the first night of the honeymoon. Some couples are glad that it should be. Others may well prefer that courtship should continue after marriage and lead to its fulfilment gradually.

However much it is desired, it may be several days before complete union is possible. This is not only because the excitement of the wedding may have brought on the monthly period early, but because the vagina in most unmarried women is partly closed by a piece of membrane or skin called the *hymen*. This may have to be stretched when the first complete union takes place, and, however gentle the husband may be, may cause a certain amount of pain, slight in most cases, and not in the least to be dreaded.* There may also be slight bleeding. Even when the hymen is stretched, it may take some time before the outlet of the vagina adapts itself so as to admit of intercourse without discomfort.

Such difficulties should not be exaggerated. Consideration and forbearance on the part of the husband greatly help to overcome them. Even if there has been some pain when the hymen was ruptured, there need be nothing further to interfere with the happiness of the union, *if wooing precedes every act of intercourse*.

No considerate husband will wish to give his wife unnecessary pain by acting hastily or roughly in these early days of marriage. His gentleness will be repaid a hundredfold in the willing and eager co-operation which his wife will later offer to him because all fear has been dispelled. Some husbands behave inconsiderately because of the common idea that intercourse is entirely the husband's affair.

The ideal is that intercourse should always be as welcome and as *satisfying* to the wife as to the husband. But to reach it takes time. Therefore let neither expect too much at first. Let both realise that married intercourse ought to be, and in due course will be, richly satisfying and delightful, but that they must help one another towards it by degrees.

If there is real difficulty or long delay in reaching a union completely satisfying to both, a doctor who specialises in this side of things should be consulted; the trouble can often be put right very simply.

* A medical examination before marriage is to be recommended, for this and for other reasons cf. p. 18.

HOW OFTEN?

How often should intercourse take place? Each married couple must find out what is best for them. No definite rule can be laid down. The following suggestions may help.

As we have seen, intercourse should only take place when both are ready for it. It may happen that one wants it when the other does not, and therefore the one who wants it may have to refrain. Each partner should try to meet the other's wishes, even at the cost of personal inclination. There are times, however, when this is hardly possible — for instance, when either is over-strained in mind or body, or in anxiety or sorrow. Again, about midway between the monthly periods the wife may be disinclined for intercourse; if so, the husband must realise that it is no lack of love on her part, but a quite natural and common condition, and he should refrain. Such days of definite disinclination sometimes fall at other times than this midway period.

Intercourse, if too frequent, may become mechanical; the meaning and beauty go out of it. Each time it happens it should be desired and valued as the expression of a deep and growing love. It should never be allowed to become cheap and common.

Where intercourse becomes simply a habit, incessant and uncontrolled, it may be that one or other partner is using it as a way of escape from strain in other directions.

Complete abstinence, if undertaken for sufficient reason and with complete mutual agreement, is not necessarily harmful; the body adjusts itself to restraint quite naturally. It need hardly be said that any excess of alcoholic drink makes control harder.

Sometimes it is the wife for whom moderation is difficult. Then the husband must try to help her to self-control. In either case the victory is half won if the difficulty is treated as a discipline which both share, and for which they try together to find the remedy.

Where intimacy has always been the expression of genuine harmony, actual abstinence (e.g. during the last months of pregnancy, illness, or temporary separation) need not involve serious strain.

PREGNANCY

As soon as pregnancy begins, the welfare of mother and child is the first consideration. The advice and help of the family doctor or ante-natal clinic should be sought without delay.

When the wife is known to be pregnant (the usual sign being that a monthly period is missed) it is not necessary to give up intercourse altogether, but it is obvious that more than ordinary care should be taken. This is especially true during the first three months, owing to the greater risk of 'miscarriage' taking place then.

Intercourse should become less frequent as the pregnancy advances and special care should be taken to avoid any lack of gentleness which might injure the mother and child. It should cease altogether not later than six weeks before the date of the birth.

This may mean a great effort of self-control on the part of the husband. But the hope of a child gives him a fresh interest; and his love for his wife will naturally make him sympathise with what she is going through. Pregnancy is a considerable undertaking for the wife, and therefore the husband will be specially careful to study her feelings, and if necessary subordinate his own.

When the child is born there should certainly be no intercourse until the mother has had time to recover completely. This will take at least six weeks.

If children do not come as soon as you hope and expect, go to a doctor for advice. The cause is nearly as often on the husband's side as on the wife's. If the sterility proves to be incurable, they should consider whether to adopt a child (or better far, *children*) and so make a new 'family.'

THE PATTERN OF THE FUTURE FAMILY

SOME of the materials — physical and emotional — which go to the making of marriage have now been examined. Now comes the next stage. What picture of ideal marriage is to inspire the right use of them?

We can say at once that while there is an ideal pattern for marriage yet every union is unique: it is what each couple make it. The idea of a kind of standard blue-print is nonsense. No one else's home and family will be quite the same as yours.

The principles on which marriage is to be built, however, are clear; and these we will now consider.

PERMANENCE

To 'marry' with half an eye on the Divorce Court is not to marry at all, in the true meaning of the word. Marriage is *complete self-giving* — no reservations, no holding back. This is its glory.

When on your wedding day, the two of you walk from the chancel steps of the church towards the altar, you will leave behind the best man, bridesmaids, fathers and mothers, and all your friends and relations. That is symbolic. You are leaving the security of the shore-waters; you have set sail upon the ocean of your life together, and there should not be any thought of turning back.

There is here a splendid *finality*: 'till death.' True love will not be content with anything less.

FAITH IN THE FUTURE

What is there to justify this great act of faith — that such complete self-surrender will bring its reward?

There are no certain grounds for it apart from our religion. The Christian Faith declares that love is at the heart of the universe — that God is love.

Without our religion we are left with a world of matter which is purposeless, without meaning. We are left with no explanation of how in such a world beauty, and love itself, have come to birth.

Christianity gives us the clue. Your marriage begins in church because it is rooted in this faith, and because you have given yourselves to each other without reserve, 'for keeps.'

CHILDREN

Love finds its fulfilment in an act which unites the two seed-cells from which a child grows. A family, therefore, is the natural fulfilment of marriage. However devoted to each other husband and wife may be, they find that there is a place in their natures which only children can fill, and that the coming of children draws them closer together. If no children come, however greatly desired, husband and wife can, in various ways, make up to each other for the loss. But a loss it is, and remains.

The lack of housing accommodation is a major social problem of our day. It throws 'in-laws' together in a way that puts strain on all of them, and makes the full surrender of husband and wife more difficult. It also puts great difficulties in the way of early parenthood. This is serious, because until her first child is born, the woman's cycle of intercourse, conception, pregnancy, and breast-feeding has not been completed. This incompleteness in the first years of marriage may set up nervous tension which adds to the difficulties of both partners in their progress towards harmony.

SPACING

Marriage and parenthood are bound up together. What of the proper spacing of the children?

If the interval between the birth of one child and the next is not less than two years, the mother will be able to recover thoroughly from the last confinement and she will not have two children in arms at the same time. The elder will be a toddler before the next one arrives.

If the interval is longer than that, especially if it extends to four or five years, it may be bad for the elder child, because it has got used to being the centre of the family. It is a privileged person, and not at all pleased at being put in the second place. Indeed, it may be left with a sense of injustice which may be a serious trouble in later life.

When children come, they take so large a share of the wife's energy that she may neglect her husband. She must guard against this; she has to be a wife as well as a mother.

On the other hand, the husband must not be exacting; the children have a rightful claim to their mother's care and love. If he leaves the children entirely to her, there is almost sure to be trouble. He should be ready to help look after them, and his wife should encourage him to do so. She can help him to realise that he has his own part to play as father.

The unspoiled freshness of children is a revelation which parents have constantly before them. To refuse to have children is not only wrong in itself, it means that husband and wife deny themselves some of the greatest joys on earth.

THE CHRISTENING

When your baby is born, you will want to bring him to be christened.

A Christian family is a part — a cell, it is sometimes called — of the Christian Family which we call the Church.

Your child becomes a member of *your* family just by being born into it. He becomes a member of *Christ's* family by being baptized.

Parents sometimes feel that they have little part in this service, and that what is done is largely done by the priest and the god-parents. Your responsibility, however, is really very great. At baptism your child is made a Christian — but he is still a Christian *child*. Whether he *grows up* a Christian depends on the sort of home you make for him, and the sort of parents you are.

When children are small they will do what you tell them, but when they are older they do what you *do*. It is therefore never enough to *send* your children to Church or Sunday School. The religion of the family must be for *all* its members, not just for *some* of them. The whole family should worship together. It is a very old-fashioned idea that parents should send their children to Church and not go themselves, or that children are not welcomed. Of course, some extra provision is made for children — e.g. Sunday School, and some special services.

FRIENDSHIPS

Marriage should increase the value of the friendships of husband or wife with other folk, because the deep sense of security they have in

each other's love gives them a fuller understanding of life, and a new freedom for other relationships.

By all means keep a place in your affections for old friends, and also make new ones, so long as there is the clear conviction that wife or husband comes before any other friend, man or woman, always. This applies specially to your relations.

‘IN-LAWS’

Your love for your parents has been changing in character throughout your life so far. It began in complete dependence when they were ‘all the world’ to you. It should have become, by the time you marry, more of a friendly partnership of equals.

Now your husband or wife comes first in a special way, so that your parents tend to become part of your general circle of friends. They are much less in the foreground of the picture. You will probably find that their attitude to you will gradually change; encourage it to do so.

Many a marriage is wrecked because when any misunderstanding arises, husband or wife rushes off to father or mother for sympathy. Such people are not really grown up. They cannot stand on their own feet. They still want to be pitied and protected as children.

You are both grown-up, or should be. You have chosen your mate for life. You are founding a home of your own. You must work out your difficulties together. Take other people's advice, if you like, but let the decisions you make be your own. You, and not your relations and friends, are responsible for making a success of your marriage.

LETTERS

Do not demand to know all one another's secrets, or read all one another's letters. Each of you may receive letters which cannot be shown to the other without being unfair to the writers. Married life can only be happy if husband and wife are prepared in such things to trust each other completely.

HEALTH

It is unfair to your partner to enter marriage without a clean bill of health. It is also unfair to the children. A doctor should therefore be seen before marriage for a thorough examination.

If there is anything likely to prevent your having children, you and your partner should know it before marriage. It may well be something which expert treatment can easily put right. Certain diseases can be handed on to the children. The couple should be fully aware of what this implies. There are certain conditions of the blood which make it unlikely that more than one baby will be born. If investigated beforehand, appropriate medical treatment can be arranged.

A thorough pre-marriage examination will also secure that there are no hindrances to full and happy intercourse in the early days.

THE FAMILY INCOME

The happiness of marriage does not depend upon riches. But however small the home, there must be sufficiency, and a reasonable certainty of being able to meet the expenses of the new household. Even if married life has to start in the house of one of the parents, there should ideally be one room at least which shall be entirely the couple's own, apart from the bedroom, unless the latter is large enough to be a bed-sitting room. Husband and wife should have the opportunity of privacy by day as well as by night.

In the ordinary way the salary or wages are paid to the husband. They should, however, be considered as belonging to husband and wife jointly, though (and this is important) both should have a personal allowance, however small, to be spent just as they wish. They should decide together how the main part of the income is to be portioned out. They will have to budget for housekeeping, clothes, luxuries, church, charities, entertainments and holidays.

The income must be regarded as belonging to both of them because both have agreed to pool resources. All the wife does to keep the home clean, comfortable and attractive is as important a contribution to their joint wealth as the earnings of the husband. Where the wife is also earning, her wages should be treated just as her husband's are.

HOME COMPANIONSHIP

Most husbands are away from home for the greater part of the day. The couple are together only in the early mornings and evenings. If they both try to make the most of their time with each other, they will be richly rewarded.

The day's work that lies ahead should not be allowed to cast its shadow over the breakfast table. If the daily paper *must* be read at that

meal, the news should be shared by both. Some couples find it best to have a paper apiece !

When the husband comes home at night, both he and his wife will find their chief refreshment in each other's society, and not settle down at once to a favourite pastime, if this leaves the other one 'out of it.'

However happy they may be, the life of husband and wife is incomplete if it is wholly kept to themselves. Part of their leisure time should be given to the welfare of those outside the home, and the affairs of the neighbourhood.

A husband should remember that his wife's work in the home may be just as tiring as his own, and that sometimes she works more hours than he does. He will therefore be glad to help in the house as much as he can.

The wife will remember that while she can do her work at her own time, he has to keep someone else's time, and it is in her interest as well as his to start him off to work punctually, without rush, and properly fed !

LEISURE TIME

Should you pursue your chosen leisure occupations together or apart ?

It is important that both husband and wife should keep themselves physically fit and mentally alert. It may be easy to do this without parting company. If they have to go their separate ways, however, for a short period each week, the decision must be a mutual one, taken on the grounds that by so doing they will not only be fitter for the daily round, but also better companions for each other.

Neither of you will assume that after marriage your favourite games and hobbies will be continued as a matter of course. You will discuss the matter together, and agree on whatever makes for the greatest good of you both.

Intellectual interests should never be given up. By enriching personality, they add to the charm and value of companionship.

THE WEDDING

THE essential act of the Marriage Service is the solemn pact between bride and bridegroom, which is ratified in God's name by the Minister who officiates. Those who are married in a Register Office *are content to have their contract recorded by the State, without seeking the blessing of God. These marriages are truly valid, and as binding as any others.

To believe in the Christian view of marriage is to believe that God Himself has united husband and wife, and that if they co-operate with Him He enables them to make of their marriage all that they hope and pray for.

The Service expresses your offering of your lives to God, and His blessing upon them. It falls into three divisions — the Introduction, the Marriage, and the Benediction.

THE INTRODUCTION

This begins with the Declaration that marriage is part of God's plan for men and women. It tells how Jesus Himself was a guest at the marriage at Cana, at which He changed water into wine in order that the festivities might not be interrupted.

There is then set forth the three-fold purpose of marriage :—

- (a) the birth and Christian upbringing of children
- (b) the right expression of the sex instinct
- (c) complete companionship in body, mind and spirit

The congregation is then asked if they know any reason why the marriage would be unlawful, and a similar question is put to the couple themselves.

THE MARRIAGE

Bride and Bridegroom now make their pact with one another, first by answering 'I will' to a question *put to them by the Minister and secondly by taking each other's hand in turn and repeating the promises after him.

* cf. p. 28.

These declarations and promises are the most solemn and binding possible. They are made 'in the sight of God and of this congregation.'

Your promise to be faithful to one another means more than avoiding what is commonly called 'infidelity.' It means that you will day by day renew your marriage in growing trust and love.

Next comes the giving and receiving of the ring. The prayer that follows shows that the ring is to be a constant reminder of the vows which you have taken.

Having done your part by taking each other 'for life' you next look beyond yourselves to God who makes you one. It remains for the Minister, as the officer and spokesman of God's church, to declare that your marriage, having fulfilled the necessary conditions, is now an act of God. He takes your right hands, as you kneel, and links them with the words: 'Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder.'

He then declares that as the outward part of matrimony has been duly completed according to the forms required by the church and the law of the land, you are now man and wife together 'in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' A blessing concludes this part of the service.

THE BENEDICTION

You are now husband and wife. God has set His seal upon your marriage. You are now responsible to Him for your married life; and you can rely on His grace to help you.

Your first act, therefore, as man and wife, is to leave the chancel steps where you have been up to this point, and to follow the Minister towards the altar for a short service of prayer.

After the Lord's Prayer (which has a special significance as 'the family prayer' at this moment of your lives), come three prayers:—

- (a) that your marriage may prepare you for eternal life;
- (b) that you may be granted the gift of children, and a sufficiently long life to see them grow up as they should;
- (c) and that your natural fondness for each other may be deepened by the same selfless love with which Christ loved us and died for us.

HOLY COMMUNION

The Prayer Book says that it is right that the newly married pair should receive the Holy Communion together immediately after the marriage ceremony, or at the first opportunity after it.

Beware of magical and superstitious ideas. The Blessing given in the Marriage Service is not a supply of grace sufficient for a life-time. It represents a beginning, and assumes that the couple will go on regularly using the means of grace, and continually receiving divine help in their weekly worship and their daily private prayers.

Many married people make a point of coming to Church and to Holy Communion on or near the anniversary of their wedding. After examining themselves to see how each has done his or her part, they renew before God the solemn vows which they took on the day they were married.

IN THE HOME

The practice of religion is not only worship in Church. It belongs to the life of the home.

It is a good plan for husband and wife, even if they have not done so before, to say their prayers together. It may be no more than a silence in which each commends dear ones to God's care, and gives thanks for special blessings, followed by the Lord's Prayer.

Family prayers can often be arranged more easily in the evening than in the morning. Children's bedtime is generally the best moment for the whole family, including father, to kneel together. Father and mother take it in turn to say a simple prayer of thanks, and to ask for protection for the coming night. A Bible story read at this time of the evening always delights the children, and may help the grown-ups to be regular in their own Bible reading.

Grace at meals, whether husband and wife are alone or with their children, links the unseen and eternal to the work-a-day world. 'For these and all thy blessings, we thank thee O Lord,' is one of many such graces that can be said.

The newspaper and the wireless bring the affairs of the world into the home. Prayer and Bible study make sure that they do not kill the spiritual side of home life.

APPENDIX I

FAMILY PLANNING AND BIRTH CONTROL

1. Christians are inevitably faced with moral problems about which there is a difference of opinion even among themselves. In such matters each must decide as seems right to his own conscience, after getting the best advice and information he can. Birth control is one of these problems and most married couples have to consider their attitude towards it.
2. There is general agreement that it is right to limit the size of the family when the well-being of mother or children demands it. It is about the method of doing this that opinions differ. Some Christians hold that to abstain from intercourse for as long as necessary is the only right way. Others use what is called the 'safe period,' though many doctors think this is quite unreliable. The method of 'withdrawal' before intercourse is complete spoils the act for both husband and wife, and in any case often fails to prevent conception.
3. It is on the use of artificial contraceptives that disagreement is sharpest. There are, speaking generally, three different points of view:

A.

That the use of contraceptives is always wrong, since it imposes an artificial limitation upon intercourse such as to alter the nature of the act. Those who hold this view allow that the use of the 'safe period' is a legitimate means of birth-control, since it involves no interference with the sex act itself: seed is deposited where it can reach the womb, even though there is no egg-cell present to be fertilised. What is *not* permissible (they say) is to make the act of intercourse something less than it is by nature.

B.

That expressed by the Lambeth Conference of 1930 (the assembly of all the Bishops of the Anglican Church throughout the world) in the following resolution (carried by 193 votes to 67):—

'Where there is a clearly felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, the method must be decided on Christian principles. The primary and obvious method is complete abstinence from intercourse (as far as may be necessary) in a life of discipline and self-control lived in the power of the Holy Spirit. Nevertheless in those cases where

there is such a clearly-felt moral obligation to limit or avoid parenthood, and where there is a morally sound reason for avoiding complete abstinence, the Conference agrees that other methods may be used, provided that this is done in the light of the same Christian principles. The Conference records its strong condemnation of the use of any methods of conception-control from motives of selfishness, luxury, or mere convenience.'

C.

That the use of contraceptives is normal in every fertile marriage, so that husband and wife may continue to express and deepen their love by sexual intercourse even at times when they do not intend to conceive another child. Man (it is said) is always 'interfering with nature' for his own purposes; and, wisely used, contraceptives allow of a fuller and richer married life than is possible without them, at least for the majority of couples. There is, therefore, not only no moral reason against their use, but a positive case in their favour.

All Christians are in complete agreement that there is no justification for the use of contraceptives

- (1) for purely selfish motives, or in the attempt to avoid proper and necessary self-control.
- (2) to avoid parenthood altogether.
- (3) outside marriage, which is entirely different from their use by husband and wife. Intercourse outside marriage, whether contraceptives are used or not, is against the teaching of Christ.

What should a married couple do? You may feel it right to ask the advice of a priest or Christian doctor or a trusted friend. In the end no one can make the decision for you: you must do that yourselves. If you really want to do the right thing and not just the easiest thing, and if you ask God to guide your choice, you may be quite sure that He will.

It may be helpful to add a note about the use of contraceptives in early marriage. So many couples have to start married life in somebody else's home — with 'in-laws,' very often — that this is a burning question. Is it better to postpone the first baby until you are living on your own — or earning more money?

This again is a matter which each couple must decide for themselves. But there are other considerations which they should bear in mind and which will help them to choose wisely.

- (i) Many couples find that to use contraceptives at the beginning of their marriage detracts from the pleasure of intercourse by spoiling the natural spontaneity of their love-making.

(ii) If there is any physical defect which means that you cannot have children, the use of contraceptives will prevent you from finding this out and having it treated. The sooner such treatment begins the more likely it is to be successful.

(iii) It is dangerously easy for a couple who decide not to have children for a time, to get so used to a higher standard of living and more freedom to go about together, than they could ever have once they become parents, that they put off starting a family year after year, and sometimes decide in the end not to have children at all. Not only is this wrong in itself, but it means they deny themselves some of the greatest joys men and women can know.

It is sometimes said that husband and wife are better fitted to be parents if they have a short period — six months or a year — in which to settle down to the business of living together *before* they have also to face the responsibilities and anxieties of caring for children. Whether or not this is true of certain couples, in most cases it is certainly best not to postpone the first baby unless the circumstances of husband and wife make it imperative to do so. If they decide not to have a child at once, then they ought to review their decision at least once every year. The anniversary of the wedding is a good time to do it.

APPENDIX II

BANNS OF MARRIAGE

If you both live not only in the same town but in the same parish, banns are called for both in the parish church.* If one of you lives in another parish, banns must be called there too. After the banns have been called for three Sundays in that parish, you must obtain a certificate of banns from the church authorities there and bring it with you to the church at which you get married. Without this certificate, you cannot be married.

If you are in doubt about which is your parish, consult a clergyman. You should make a point of attending the services at which your banns are called to make sure there is no error.

PARENTS' CONSENT

If either of you is under 21, then the written consent of both parents (witnessed by a neighbour) must be obtained for the party under that age. No one under 16 can legally marry at all, with or without parents' consent.

SOME PRACTICAL DETAILS ABOUT THE SERVICE

Before issuing invitations to the wedding, be sure to arrange the time and date with the Vicar or Rector in whose parish you are to get married.

The groom and best man arrive first at the church, at least ten minutes before the Service is due to start. The best man should have the fees payable ready in his pocket, as well as the ring. These two take their seats in the front of the church on the right hand side (as you face the altar). The best man sits on the right of the groom.

BRIDESMAIDS

Bridesmaids arrive next, and they should wait at the church entrance. They should *stand* all through the Service.

* If you are on the Electoral Roll of a parish your banns may be called there, even if you do not live in that parish.

THE BRIDE

The bride arrives with her father (or whoever gives her away). She takes her father's right arm with her left hand, thus leaving her right hand free to carry her bouquet (if any).

As the bride walks up the church, the groom and best man rise from their seats, and stand at the foot of the steps to the chancel (the steps can be clearly seen). The best man stands on the right, and the bride takes her place on the left hand of the groom. The bride's father stands on her left, the bridesmaids behind.

The bride then hands her flowers to the bridesmaids, and next takes off her gloves.

QUESTIONS

The answer to the question put to the groom and the bride — 'John (or Mary) wilt thou have this woman (man) to thy wedded wife (husband) . . . ' is 'I WILL,' not 'I do.'

When the question 'Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?' is asked, the bride's father makes no spoken reply. He takes the bride by her right hand with his right hand, and passes her hand to the Minister. He, in turn, passes the bride's hand to the groom, who takes it, and holds it. Still holding it, the groom repeats after the Minister: 'I, John, take thee, Mary, etc. . . .' When this has been done, they loose their hands for a moment, and then rejoin (still using right hands), and the bride in turn repeats: 'I, Mary, take thee, John . . .' In some churches bride and groom face each other for the exchange of vows.

The Prayer Book is then held out to the best man who places the ring upon it, to be blessed. The Minister then holds out the book to the groom, who takes the ring and places it upon the bride's fourth finger (left hand). He holds it there, repeating after the Minister: 'With this ring I thee wed . . .'

Bride and groom then kneel (not the best man or the father or congregation). The Minister then asks them to join their right hands again, and he clasps them in his, and says: 'Those whom God hath joined together . . .' Then comes a blessing.

After the blessing, the bride's father and the best man return to seats in the body of the church. Bridesmaids remain where they are. Bride and groom follow the Minister to the altar rails, but do not pass up into the sanctuary. Here they remain kneeling until the end of the service, unless there is an address.

SIGNING THE REGISTERS

At the conclusion of the Service, the bridal couple follow the Minister to the Vestry where the two registers are signed. Bridesmaids follow with the best man, and the parents of the groom and of the bride. Two witnesses sign the registers, often the best man and bride's father, though it may be others. Bride and groom sign their full signatures. The bride signs her maiden name. Usual signatures (see that they are legible) are sufficient for the witnesses.

MUSIC

If you decide to have the organ (and choir), discuss the hymns with the Vicar or Organist. Have well-known tunes. 'Lead us, Heavenly Father,' 'O Father All Creating,' 'Through all the changing scenes of life,' and 'O Perfect Love,' are all suitable hymns. There are, of course, the usual fees to be paid.

GUESTS

Tell your guests not to move from their places until you have left the church. You do not want the church empty while you leave, especially if the Wedding March is being played.

THE REGISTER OFFICE

If you decide to be married in a Register Office, it will take the same time to arrange as if you were married in church. The same notice has to be given. The cost is not necessarily less than that of a church wedding. These points are mentioned here because sometimes a couple who really wished to be married in church give up the idea because they believe they can be married so much more cheaply, and quickly, in a Register Office.

IN CONCLUSION

. . . . Don't be afraid to ask your parish priest if you want further help or advice about any queries raised by this little book. If he cannot help you himself he will be able to put you in touch with other people, or with some organisation, which can.

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